

By Jason Epp

• Daily Leader

It was the first toy I ever had. A football. My dad laid it next to me in the hospital crib. Something seeped out of that ball and formed laces across the two halves of my gray matter, because I have had football on my brain ever since.

My favorite Christmas gift from my childhood — Electronic Football.

My favorite Christmas gift as a teenager — a football jersey.

I am one of the easiest people on the planet to shop for, just grab something related to football and there is a pretty good chance I will love it.

Well, this year is no different than any other year. The gift at the top of my list is football-related as always, but my wife, kids, or parents can't go to the store and buy it. No, there are a group of well-dressed Scrooges, otherwise known as college presidents, who will not let me have what I want, a college football playoff.

There are seventeen NCAA sponsored Division 1 men's and women's team championships that are settled with a playoff. There are football playoffs in all four other divisions of college football, but not Division 1-A (I refuse to call it the Football Bowl Subdivision). So this is my plea to Santa or whoever will listen, here is how we can make it happen.

First, we eliminate the 12th game and conference championship games.

The Florida-Alabama, SEC Championship was the only quality matchup among the five championship games this year. If teams have identical conference records at the end of the season, they are co-champions just like the good ole days.

The playoff will consist of sixteen teams. Even at sixteen teams, football would still have the smallest percentage of teams making the playoffs of any NCAA sponsored team sport. The top 16 of the final BCS rankings would be the teams that made the playoffs with one exception. If there are any conference champions ranked 17-20, they would replace the lowest ranked non-conference champion. For Example:

This year #19 Virginia Tech (winner of the ACC) would replace #16 Brigham Young (3rd place Mountain West).

The first round would be played on the first Saturday of December, at the higher seeded home stadium to reward excellence during the regular season. The only concession that could be used is there could be one spot changes to avoid conference foes from meeting in the first round. Seeding two brackets 1-8 instead of one bracket 1-16 would accomplish this in most cases. For Example: This year #2 Florida would be scheduled to play #15 Georgia, but instead #1 Oklahoma would host Georgia and #2 Florida would host #19 Virginia Tech. Both Oklahoma and Florida are 1 seeds, and both Virginia Tech and Georgia are 8 seeds. So let's take a trip back in time, way back to December 9th of this year. This would be the matchups you would have seen.

8 Georgia Bulldogs at 1 Oklahoma

5 Boise State Broncos at 4 Penn State

6 TCU Horned Frogs at 3 Southern Cal Trojans

7 Oklahoma State Cowboys at 2 Alabama Crimson Tide

8 Virginia Tech Hokies at 1 Florida Gators

5 Ohio State Buckeyes at 4 Texas Tech Red Raiders

6 Cincinnati Bearcats at 3 Utah Utes

7 Georgia Tech at 2 Texas Longhorns

I know this, my family would know where to find me on that day. I would be on the couch, watching it from the moment it came on until the last one went off. National powerhouses colliding, the little guys trying to pull off great upsets, and a non-BCS team in Utah, hosting one of the eight games. I doesn't get any better than this until.

America has waited with great anticipation for New Year's Day. The minor bowls that took place from December 20 through the 31st between teams that either did not make the playoffs or those who lost in the first round, had been a nice diversion, but it was time for the big games.

The matchups had already been set by the brackets, and on Sunday, December 10th everyone found out where each of these matchups would take place and waited for twenty days for them to arrive.

First, on New Year's Eve: at 7 pm central time, 11-1 Florida vs. 11-1 Texas Tech in the Fiesta Bowl to welcome in the new year. Then on New Year's Day: 11:30 am central time, 11-1 Texas taking on 12-0 Utah in the Cotton Bowl, at 3 pm CST, 11-1 Oklahoma vs. 11-1 Penn State in the Rose Bowl, and the nightcap would be Southern Cal taking on Alabama in the Sugar Bowl. They are right. We shouldn't have a playoff. I don't know if I could stand that much great football in a 28-hour span.

But the great college football would not be over. The four survivors would head to south Florida for the Orange Bowl Final Four. The Orange Bowl does present one dilemma that none of the

other four venues have to deal with. Dolphins Stadium is natural turf and there is no second large capacity stadium in the Miami vicinity. One of the semifinals games could be played in Citrus Bowl in Orlando. The highest final BCS rankings rated team would play at the host site and the other game would be played at the secondary site. The only exception would be if one of the stadiums were the home stadium of one of the participating teams. Example: if the Miami Hurricanes were in the Orange Bowl Final Four the semifinal they participated in would be at the Citrus Bowl, unless they were the highest ranked team of the four left.

January 10, 2009 3 pm at the Citrus Bowl in Orlando, Florida, it could be the 12-1 Florida Gators battling the 12-1 Texas Longhorns for the chance to play for the national championship. Later that evening at 7 it could be the 12-1 Oklahoma Sooners taking on the 12-1 Southern Cal Trojans to see who would move on.

After these epic battles have been completed the two victors could stay right where they are continuing to prepare the Orange Bowl National Championship that will take place Monday, January 19, at 7 pm. Would we see an east coast-west coast matchup with Florida and Southern Cal, or a rematch of the Red River Rivalry between Oklahoma and Texas. Whoever it would be, this game would be bigger in the United States than the Super Bowl, not worldwide, but in the US. And whoever won it would know they earn it on the field.

If you have comments, questions, or suggestions you can e-mail me at jason@hpleader.com . If there is enough response we may run a follow- up article to answer those questions.